

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of this application is respectfully requested in light of the above amendments and the following remarks.

New claims 18-40 highlight the patentable features of the present invention. Independent claim 18 is directed to subject matter similar to previous claims 1, 15 and 6. Claims 21-28 depend from claim 18 and correspond respectively to previous claims 5 and 8-14. Independent claim 29 is similar to the subject matter of previous claims 1, 15 and 7. Claims 32-39 depend from claim 29 and correspond respectively to previous claims 5 and 8-14. Independent claim 40 is similar to previous claims 1 and 15.

Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 10-13 were rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as anticipated by Lau et al. Claims 3, 4, 9 and 14 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Lau et al. Claims 15-17 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Lau et al. in view of Goicoechea et al.

It is noted that claim 7 was not rejected on art.

Thus, new claims 29-39, which include the subject matter of claim 7, are deemed directed to allowable subject matter.

It is submitted that claims 18-28 and 40 are allowable over the individual or combined teachings of Lau et al. and Goicoechea et al. for at least the following reasons.

As noted in the office action, Lau et al. does not disclose the links recited in previous claim 15. This subject matter is recited in all of the new independent claims. It is submitted that Lau et al. and Goicoechea et al. do not render obvious this subject matter as detailed below.

The claims now recite:

(a) Each link has a sole central portion. This is not taught by the embodiments of Figs. 3 and 9 of Lau et al. nor by anything in Goicoechea et al.

(b) Each link has two loops. This feature is not taught by Goicoechea et al.

The Applicant respectfully notes that a link according to claim 18 has a sole central portion and two end portions or loops, whereas the embodiment of Fig. 9 of Lau et al. comprises two end portions of flexible linkage 210 which are connected together via two central portions. These two end portions and these two central portions form a sole bow or ring (see Fig. 9). This embodiment has drawbacks of low suppleness and high wear. The link according to claim 18 which has two loops separated by one central portion is able to overcome these drawbacks. In fact, the parts of filaments which are linked by the kink according to the present claimed invention are independent of one another, thus improving the suppleness of the structure, first by preventing these parts of the

filaments from rubbing together and second by separating from one another the two parts of the structure which are associated one with each of these two parts of filament.

(c) The link is able to be brought into one of two different shapes or positions (or allows two different shapes). In one position, prior to linking, each end portion is an arc of a circle, which facilitates the assembling of the structure. In fact, the arc of a circle is preformed in such a manner that the fixing or assembling supposes only the closing of this arc of circle in order to obtain a closed loop. Thus, it is not necessary to exert an important force. Since the flexible linkage 210 (Fig. 9) of Lau et al. has a sole ring, it cannot have two arcs of a circle prior to linking.

(d) In the linking position, the link according to the claimed invention has two closed loops, each of them entrapping one corrugation. This embodiment has the aforementioned advantages. On the other hand, in the linking position, the flexible linkage 210 of Lau et al. has a sole closed ring entrapping two corrugations 206.

(e) Moreover, according to claim 18, in the linking position, the loop is an entirely closed loop. This provides an extremely robust connection (see for example the description at application page 5, lines 21-24 and page 9, lines 34-36).

Goicoechea et al. do not teach any of features (a) to (e). In fact, Goicoechea et al. state that the securing means may be a sole loop, a sloe ring or a staple (see col. 4, lines 38 and 39). Thus, Goicoechea et al. does not add anything to the teachings of Lau et al. which would have rendered obvious the present claimed invention.

Thus, it is submitted that claims 18-28 are allowable over Lau et al. and Goicoechea et al. whether considered alone or in combination.

Claim 29 differs form claim 18 in that, in the linking position, the loop is not entirely closed, but is partially closed, i.e., it is just closed up to entrap the corrugation that is to be linked. This feature, which is disclosed neither by Lau et al. or by Goicoechea et al., is very advantageous because it makes the link easier to fit. In fact, during this fitting, it is not necessary to exert force to completely close the loop (see application page 5, lines 28-31, page 9, line 37 and page 19, line 3).

Claim 40 is similarly allowable because each link according to claim 40 includes more than two loops which are all connected to the central portion.

Regarding claims 20 and 31, it is submitted that neither Lau et al. or Goicoechea et al. teach or suggest this subject matter,

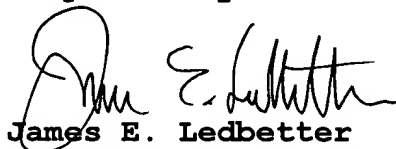
taken alone or together. An advantage of this subject matter is that the loops are closer together.

Regarding claims 28 and 39, it is submitted that neither Lau et al. or Goicoechea et al. teach or suggest this subject matter, whether the reference teachings are taken alone or together. It would not have been obvious to modify Lau et al. to include these features.

For at least the above reasons, it is submitted that claims 18-40 are not rendered obvious by Lau et al. and Goicoechea et al. Thus, a Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

If any issues remain which may best be resolved through a telephone communication, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned at the local Washington, D.C. telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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